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THE

# OREGON TERRITORY.

CLAIMS

THERETO

OF ENGLAND AND AMERICA CONSIDERED;

ITS CONDITION AND PROSPECTS.

BY ALEXANDER SIMPSON, ESQ.

A LATE BRITISH RESIDENT THERE.

"Non ego sum vates, sed prisca conscius ævi."

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## INTRODUCTION.

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IN the autumn of 1839, being then an officer of the Hudson's Bay Company, I made the descent of the Columbia, or Oregon River, from a northern defile of the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific. I spent some months of the year 1840 in the Oregon country, and made visits during the same year to the Sandwich Islands, and to Monterey, the capital town, and San Francisco, the best harbour of California.

Circumstances placed me, in the year 1842, in the position of political agent for Great Britain at the Sandwich Islands.

I had, early, become convinced of the vital importance to British interests in the Pacific, of the sovereignty of that interesting group, and of its intrinsic value for the purpose of colonization. I felt confident of the right of England to this sovereignty : a right grounded on priority

of discovery, and repeated cession by the native chiefs. Its virtual subjection to American rulers was self-evident; and the danger of its being seized upon by the naval squadrons of France imminent. Thus influenced, I, unhesitatingly, took a prominent part in the bloodless *coup de main* by which the sovereignty of the group was, in February 1843, placed at the command of Her Britannic Majesty.\*

Immediately after its consummation, I took my departure for Britain,† charged with the self-imposed mission of personally representing to the Members of Her Majesty's Government, the importance of the acquisition thus made to Her Majesty's dominions.

Unknown, unfriended, utterly unacquainted

\* Of the circumstances connected with this affair, I have given a full detail in a pamphlet, "The Sandwich Islands," published by Smith and Elder, in October 1843.

† My first progress was in a very small schooner, commanded by a very young midshipman of the Carysfort frigate, to Mazattan on the west coast of Mexico. I traversed the Republic to Vera Cruz. There I was much disposed to have taken passage *vid* the United States, but *luckily* found a Spanish coaster which landed me at Cuba. I say *luckily*, because the intense feeling excited in the States, by the receipt of intelligence of the measure in which I had been concerned, would have ensured me at least much insult, perchance in the Southern districts drawn upon me the tender mercies of Judge Lynch.

with politics and with politicians, my representations, though received with every courtesy, I may say kindness, by Lord Aberdeen and his colleagues in the Cabinet, were without effect. A recognition of the Sandwich Islands as an independent kingdom(!) was the decision arrived at. "That decision was taken," to use the words of the organ of the Foreign Office, "not from any want either of right (*of sovereignty*) or power to defend that right; but simply because it was held to be *inexpedient* to found a colonial establishment, and to awaken the jealousy of other countries for no purpose that cannot be equally secured by the maintenance of the independence of the country."

I considered then—still stronger reasons have I for considering now—that this was a most "untoward" decision. It was, as we have seen, formed avowedly on the ground of *expediency*; and was, I have the strongest reasons to believe, the result of interference in the matter by the Government of the United States. There the value to Great Britain of this acquisition of territory was at once appreciated. A naval station in the Pacific which should completely command the northern part of that ocean, including the western route to China, and the shores of the coveted

“Oregon” could not, quietly, be permitted to come into the possession of “grasping England.” The usual machinery of American diplomacy—*lengthy* Presidential Messages to Congress, excited discussions thereon, bellicose communications from the American Ambassador to Downing Street—was brought into operation to defeat my project—and with entire success.

Freed from the restraints of an official position, I published my views in relation to affairs in the Pacific. That these bore much reference to the Oregon (then, indeed, but a very “small cloud in the West”) will be rendered apparent by the following short extracts.

“*What* the feeling on the *North-Eastern* Boundary Question ran highest, the attention of the Americans was much more earnestly, though not so overtly, directed to the *North-West* territory. The country lying west of the Rocky Mountains, having an extent of coast of nearly one thousand miles, and averaging in breadth three hundred miles, is still open to both powers. England with a good right to the whole, claims only a part. The Americans, with no right to any part, claim the whole; and though their Executive is willing to make a division, it is doubtful whether the people—the

real Government—would sanction it. Yet Lord Ashburton, it was assumed, had settled every point in dispute !”

“The Columbia River and the Bay of San Francisco, are the outlets to the ocean of that vast territory known as ‘the Oregon,’ which is fast colonizing by American citizens, and which will, undoubtedly, ere twenty years are past, form a powerful Anglo-Saxon state, which will command the whole western coast of North America and the Northern Pacific Ocean.”

“We hold the barren islands of Bermuda at an immense expense, avowedly as a point of command over the American coast. I venture to say that the formation of a British Colony at the Sandwich Islands, and the placing there of two or three steam vessels of war, would be fully as powerful a check on the warlike propensities of our American brethren.”

“A restless American population is already pouring by *hundreds* into the Oregon country lying on the shore of the Pacific Ocean. They will soon pour in by *thousands*, for a route has been traced by which waggons pass, without the slightest difficulty, from the Missouri to the lower part of the Columbia River, and where waggons can pass *Westward* Americans will emigrate. The Oregon country is their *El*



*Dorado* ; and a very few years will add to it the northern part of California."

During the Session of Congress of winter 1843—44, indications were not wanting of the opinions and feelings of the citizens of the Republic on this question. Petitions, memorials and addresses, were presented, in great numbers, to Congress, praying for the immediate abrogation of the treaty of joint occupancy ; and though the ultimate decision of that body was, that it was inexpedient, at that juncture, to adopt this step, yet enough was disclosed, during the debates, of the spirit of hostility towards this country entertained by the politicians—high and low—of the Union to have warned our statesmen of the coming danger.

Our statesmen are, I believe, much dependant for information of passing events, and for the shaping of their policy in reference thereto, on the columns of our public journals. In this case, unfortunately, the information, and deductions therefrom, of the "leading journal" were far from correct. It ridiculed the demonstration of public opinion and feeling in America in favour of a military possession of "the Oregon ;" and instead of exciting alarm by calling attention to the warlike declarations of popular representatives, who, whatever might be their obscurity

and stupidity, yet truly spoke the popular voice—it wrote them down as the ravings of a paltry and despicable clique without influence and without character.

Impressed with a conviction that American feelings on this subject, were too strongly excited, and their tendency too dangerous to allow their being thus lightly considered, I endeavoured to call public attention to the subject by a series of letters in “the Times,” which I *now* present in a collected form, as an attempt to elucidate the unfortunate question which threatens to drive into an unnatural war two mighty nations having the same origin, speaking the same language, and having, if they truly understood them, the same interests.

# THE OREGON QUESTION.

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## LETTER I.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

“ Sir,

“The pugnacious Mr. Owen, whose warlike declarations on the subject of the ‘the Oregon’ you animadverted upon in your paper of the 20th, has, without doubt, truly represented the state of feeling among a very large proportion of the population of the United States, when he said: ‘We must have the valley of the Columbia—the Oregon is our land of promise—and England must and will take herself off.’

“Those sentiments are not, as you assume, confined to ‘half a dozen provincial newspapers, such as Americans only can edit, and to two or three squatting or freebooting mobs,

such as America only can produce,' but are entertained by ninety-nine out of every hundred Americans. From Massachusetts to Iowa; from Cape Cod to Cape Hatteras, the cry is still the same. Inspect an American map, and you will observe that either a boundary line is drawn from the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific along the parallel of  $49^{\circ}$ ; all the fine country to the south being described as American territory, while the rugged, barren, and utterly useless tract to the north is left to 'the Britishers;' or else that the geographer, anticipating the declaration recently made by an influential politician of the Union (General Cass): 'We must have no red lines traversing the Oregon—the whole is ours, and we will have it,' has divided the whole of the western coast of Northern America between his own country, Russia, and Mexico. I do not think a single map could be purchased in the United States from which an observer could gather that there exists such a thing as a convention between England and the United States, by which it is agreed that all the territory which it pleases the Americans to call 'the Oregon,' 'shall be free and open to the vessels, citizens, and subjects of the two powers.' An arrangement which though entered into only for a limited

term of years, cannot be abrogated by the United States without the consent of England, except at the risk of a war.

“ The late Resolutions of Congress show that, for the present, it is not considered prudent to incur this risk ; but the people of the United States having, by a certain train of reasoning, convinced themselves that their right to the whole of this ‘debateable land’ is well-founded—a conviction which President Tyler expressed very strongly in his last Message to Congress—will not cease from bullying and blustering until their claims are fully admitted, or a determination expressed by the British people that the fair and liberal offers made by the British Government to obtain a settlement of the question, not being accepted by the Executive of the United States, the question must now rest on its true merits.

“ I venture to hope that an attempt to elucidate these will find a place in your columns.

“ It is an admitted fact that the discovery and exploration of the whole of the Pacific Coast of North America was accomplished by vessels fitted out by the Governments of England and Spain.

“ It would be tedious, and I think unneces-

sary, to discuss the question as to which power was the discoverer of different portions of this coast; but this much is admitted, or asserted by *American* writers, and is substantially correct—that in 1542, a Spanish Captain proceeded as far up the coast as latitude 44° N.; that in 1578, Sir Francis Drake reached the coast in latitude 48° N., and coasted it down to latitude 38° N., where he entered and refitted in a port which still bears his name; that in 1774, a Spanish vessel, fitted out by the Provincial Government of Mexico, saw points of the coast as far as latitude 54°; and that in 1778—9 our illustrious navigator, Cook, traced the coast from latitude 43° up to the Arctic Ocean, with the view of discovering an inland-sea leading from the Pacific to the Atlantic:—a survey which was more minutely gone over by Captain Vancouver in 1791—3. Much was added to the knowledge of the harbours and sounds of the coast by private adventurers in the fur trade sailing under the English flag; while by the American Government (then in its infancy, it is true,) nothing was done, and the American traders who visited the coast, did so stealthily, or by the connivance of the subordinate Spanish officers, whose venality has always been notorious.

“Robert Gray, one of those smuggling traffickers, entered, in the year 1791, a bay, the mouth of which had been previously examined by Cook and Vancouver. This bay formed the *embouchure* of the river called the Columbia, or Oregon, (the Columbia being the name bestowed on it by Mr. Gray, while the Oregon is a purely fabulous name invented by one Carver, in 1766, to designate a river which he asserted he had visited running westward from the Rocky Mountains).\* Lieutenant Broughton—Vancouver’s second in command—entered this river in 1792, and surveyed it for one hundred miles from its mouth, taking formal possession of the country on its banks in the name of His Britannic Majesty.

“Notwithstanding the prominent share which Great Britain had taken in the discovery and exploration of this coast, the Spanish Government affected to consider the whole as exclusively theirs; and in enforcement of this claim took possession, in 1789, of Nootka Sound—a port where some English traders had established themselves, and also seized two English trading vessels. The news of this forcible proceeding caused much indignation in Eng-

\* Thus American claims to, and name of this region, are alike falsities.

land. A message on the subject was sent down to Parliament by His Majesty George III., and cordially responded to by both Houses. A large and powerful armament was speedily equipped; and Spain was forced to accede to the 'Nootka Treaty,' by which she agreed to restore the establishments at Nootka, to indemnify the owners for the losses they had sustained, and, moreover, to acknowledge that she possessed no exclusive right as regarded British subjects, to any part of the Pacific coast 'situate to the north of the parts already occupied by Spain.' The most northern settlement then existing under the Spanish Government was San Francisco in latitude 38°.

"But while Spain thus acknowledged, 'on compulsion,' the claims of Great Britain to a participation in the North Pacific coast of America, she publicly asserted against other nations her exclusive claim to the coast, and enforced this claim as far as her own weakness, and the venality of her officers would permit.

"By a Treaty executed in 1819, (the Florida Treaty), Spain transferred to the United States the claims of whatever nature which she possessed to the country on the Pacific to the north of latitude 42°: the United States acknowledging the territory south of that parallel to belong to Spain.



“The United States consequently possess, by transference from Spain, a commensurate right with Great Britain to the territory between 42° and 54° 40' N. latitude, (the Russian boundary), and, as I contend, nothing more ; while Great Britain holds a claim to joint trade and occupancy with the United States of all that territory, and to joint trade and occupancy with Mexico of the territory between latitude 38° and 42° —a region of much fertility and beauty.

*“ Thus Great Britain, really, possesses a larger interest in the unsettled country west of the Rocky Mountains than the United States.*

“In future Letters I shall describe the progress of internal occupation and exploration ; and state, from personal observation, the present extent and future prospects of British and American trade and settlement in this ‘debateable land.’

“I am,

“Sir,

“Your very obedient, humble servant,

“A. S.”

February 24, 1844.

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## LETTER II.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

“ Sir,

“ Having, in my letter of the 24th of February, adverted to the rights of trade and settlement on the north-west coast of America which England has acquired by discovery and treaty—rights originally participated by Spain, and now by her representatives in that region, the United States and Mexico—I proceed next to narrate the progress of internal exploration and occupation of that country.

“ Before the commencement of the present century, the North-West Company of Montreal—a powerful and active, though unchartered body, had, in the pursuit of its business, the collection of furs, explored and formed establishments throughout the whole of the unsettled wilderness of Northern America, as far northward as the region bordering on the Arctic Circle, and westward, as the Rocky Mountains ; the Jesuit Missionaries from Canada having been, to a considerable extent, its pioneers.

“ In 1793, Mackenzie, one of the officers of this body, pushed his way through the

northern defiles of the Rocky Mountains, and by exertions almost incredible, reached the Pacific Ocean in latitude 52°. Aware that England had, three years before, extorted from Spain the acknowledgment of the right of her subjects to a share in the trade of this region, he enters, in the published narrative of his travels, into many details respecting it. In those, though there is much over-estimation of the value and importance of the fur-trade, (natural enough from a fur-trader), there is also much valuable information, and many allusions, almost prophetic, to the encroaching and over-reaching spirit of our Trans-Atlantic brethren.

“The field for the extension of its commerce thus opened up, was not likely to be overlooked by this enterprizing association. Its establishments were rapidly extended westward. In 1805 it had several trading posts on the upper waters of the rivers flowing into the Pacific, and had projected an expedition to reach that ocean by a more southern route than that followed by Mackenzie, from which purpose it was temporarily diverted by the necessity of concentrating its resources to meet a formidable rival association headed by that gentleman, who had been knighted for his discoveries.

This new association coalesced with the older company in 1804—5, and immediately afterwards trading posts were established at several points west of the Rocky Mountains, and a descent made, in 1808, to the Pacific Ocean by Frazer's River (latitude 49°).

“It may be argued by the supporters of American claims, that these were the proceedings of a private association, unconnected with and unchartered by the State. Undoubtedly, so they were; but the same argument would effectually annul the claims which they themselves urge on the ground that a private American trader (or rather smuggler) was the first to enter the bay into which the Columbia River flows; and also the claims which they found on priority of occupation of the country bordering on that river by the establishment of ‘Astoria,’ to which I shall presently refer.

“In 1804, an expedition, under the command of Messrs. Lewis and Clarke was organized by the American Government for the purpose of traversing the country between the Missouri River and the Pacific. This expedition fully accomplished its object in 1805. After crossing the wide region of the Missouri—then a wilderness inhabited only by Indians, now in the course of rapid settlement by the back-

woodsmen of the west—those officers passed the Rocky Mountains in latitude  $46\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ , and followed first a branch of the Columbia River, which flowed nearly due west, and then the main stream, till they reached the Pacific Ocean. This river (as stated in my previous letter) had been surveyed for one hundred miles from its mouth by an English officer, twelve years before, and the country formally taken possession of in the name of His Britannic Majesty.

“The trade of the coast begun by British adventurers from India and China fell, soon after the breaking out of the war of the French Revolution, entirely into the hands of American adventurers, who, without any other aim than that of making the most of their present voyage, and without any attempt at settlement, carried on a dangerous but lucrative commerce ; while the trade of the interior country, so far as it was explored, was in the hands of the North-West Company.

“In 1810, Mr. John Jacob Astor, an enterprising German settled in New York, formed a project to establish a trade on the Pacific Coast, by means of an inland communication across the continent, a maritime communication round Cape Horn, and a direct intercourse with China.

“The proceedings of the ill-selected individuals employed to carry into execution this project have had the fortune to be narrated by the same eloquent writer who chronicled the Voyages of Columbus and his followers, and the wars of the Moors and Spaniards; and have thence acquired a celebrity to which they had little intrinsic claim. Such is the force of genius, that the name of ‘Astoria,’ a wretched wooden stockade, utterly deserted for more than twenty years, is as widely known as that of Cincinnati or of Buffalo, those really wonderful cities of the West.

“Mr. Irving has descanted so eloquently on the magnificent conception of Mr. Astor, and described so feelingly the sorrow of that gentleman on its failure, (worthy Mr. Astor was just the man to be inconsolable when his dollars were leaking out) that this failure is believed by the Americans to have been quite a national loss, although their government gave no support to the scheme.

“By the officers employed by Mr. Astor—most of whom were British subjects—a trading establishment called ‘Astoria,’ was built on the south bank of the Columbia River, near its junction with the Pacific (latitude 46°); but they did not remain long in quiet posses-

sion of the field. The North-West Company also sent an expedition to establish a branch of its trade on the same ground. An English cruizer was despatched soon after the breaking out of the war, with orders to capture and destroy Mr. Astor's establishment. Of this, Mr. Astor's agents had early intimation; and previous to her arrival (1813), they made a sale to the local agent of the North-West Company of the establishment with the goods and furs it contained; so that the British Captain, on his arrival, found, much to his disappointment, that the whole had become British property.

“The North-West Company continued in the exclusive occupation of this place, and of other posts which it established on both banks of the Columbia River from this period till 1821, when its capital and establishments were merged in those of its chartered rival—the Hudson's Bay Company.

“This body has gradually extended its establishments along the coast to the north of the Columbia River; and after a long and expensive struggle with American adventurers both on the coast and in the interior, has, for several years back, enjoyed nearly a monopoly of the fur trade of this region—a monopoly which

though still maintained against traders from the Atlantic States, is being fast encroached upon by the progress of internal settlement by Americans.

“Even were no other sources of information open to me, I might trace from Custom-House returns that the gross produce of the furs collected in this entire region has not amounted to the annual sum of £40,000, and gradually diminishes.

“By a Convention between Great Britain and the United States, signed in London on the 20th of October, 1818, it is agreed that ‘any country that may be claimed by either party on the north-west coast of America, westward of the Stony Mountains, shall, together with its harbours, bays, and creeks, and the navigation of all the rivers within the same, be free and open for the term of ten years from the date of signature of the present Convention to the vessels, citizens, and subjects of the two powers.’

“This arrangement was renewed in 1827 (when negotiations began for a conclusive settlement of the question) for an indefinite period ; each party being at liberty to abrogate it on giving a year’s notice of its intention to the other.



"This notice of abrogation it has been considered by Congress inexpedient *for the present* to give.

" I am,

" Sir,

" Your very obedient servant,

" A. S."

March 25, 1844.

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### LETTER III.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

" Sir,

"In my preceding letters I endeavoured to trace the progress of discovery on the coast, and exploration of the interior country of 'the Oregon.' I now proceed to advert to the present position of that disputed territory.

" You cannot have failed, Mr. Editor, while perusing the lucubrations of your Trans-Atlantic brethren of the broad-sheet, and while wading through the lengthy harangues of the orators sent to Congress from the Western States, to have observed the immense importance which it pleases them to ascribe to the operations of the Hudson's Bay Company all over Northern

America, but particularly in the Oregon. One of the recent speakers in Congress went even the length of asserting that it had succeeded in making away with (how, he did not explain) four or five hundred American emigrants, who had crossed the Rocky Mountains in 1842; and the most moderate gravely assert that this body holds military possession of this Western region in the name, and for the benefit of England, in the same manner that the East India Company holds the immense Indian empire—*Mecum comparatur Ulysses!*

“I stated in my last that the gross return of all the trade in this region carried on by the Hudson’s Bay Company, does not exceed the annual sum of £40,000—a small revenue out of which to pay the expense of a military possession of a country extending along the ocean upwards of twelve degrees of latitude, and varying in breadth from three hundred to nine hundred miles! Let me describe the real position of this association as regards ‘the Oregon.’

“In the year 1821, an Act was passed by the British Parliament, (I & II Geo. IV. cap. LXVI) which, after stating in the preamble that ‘the competition in the fur trade between the Governor and Company of Adventurers of

England trading into Hudson's Bay, and certain associations of persons trading under the name of the North-West Company of Montreal, has been found for some years past to be productive of great inconvenience and loss, and of great injury to the native Indians, and other persons subjects of His Majesty,'—enacts that 'it shall be lawful for His Majesty, &c., to make grants, or give his Royal license to any Body Corporate, or Company, or person, or persons, of and for the exclusive privilege of trading with the Indians in all such parts of North America as shall be specified in any such grants or licenses respectively, not being any part of the lands or territories heretofore granted to the Hudson's Bay Company, and not being part of any of His Majesty's provinces of North America, or of any lands and territories belonging to the United States of America.' This last reservation is repeated more emphatically in a subsequent clause to the following effect: 'And, whereas by a Convention entered into between His Majesty and the United States of America, it was stipulated and agreed that any country on the north-west coast of America to the westward of the Stony Mountains should be free and open to the citizens and subjects of the two powers for the term of ten years, from

the date of the signature of that Convention ; be it therefore enacted, that nothing in this Act contained shall be deemed or construed to authorize any Body Corporate, Company or person to whom His Majesty may have, under the provisions of this Act, made a grant, or given a license of exclusive trade with the Indians to claim or exercise any such exclusive trade within the limits specified in the said article, to the prejudice or exclusion of any citizens of the United States of America, who may be engaged in the said trade.'

In virtue of this Act, the Hudson's Bay Company has, successively, received two grants for twenty-one years each (in force until 1863) of exclusive trade with Indians in the extra provincial portions of British America.

"Virtually, therefore, so far as the Oregon is concerned, this Company has, solely, the right to exclude British subjects from trade with Indians, and nothing more ; against American citizens it has no exclusive rights of any kind.

"The grant thus guardedly limited by statute has not been practically exceeded. The trade with Indians has, indeed, been carefully followed up, and by means of large resources nearly monopolized—with a result which I have already stated ; but except trifling defences erected at

three or four trading places (defences which would be utterly useless against the smallest body of white men) to guard against sudden attack from the Indians, each place it occupies is as unprotected as the mill of a Manchester manufacturer. The whole number of its officers and servants resident in this region does not exceed three hundred ; and so far from the latter being—as it pleases the excited imaginations of the Western orators to paint them—a band of fierce desperadoes, ready with their rifles to pick off, at the command of their masters, any intruding citizen, they are as mingled, motley, and unwarlike a rabble as can well be imagined. Hebrideans, Orkneymen, Canadians, and Sandwich Islanders, being in about equal numbers ; men well-trained to work in boats and to ride over the Prairies, but undisposed for and untrained to warfare of any kind. Nevertheless, your correspondent of last summer—General Duff Green (the gentleman whom you happily described as having a talent for impudence) made it one of his charges against ‘grasping England,’ that the Hudson’s Bay Company maintained an army of fifteen hundred fighting men in this region.

“Hordes of fierce savages, acting entirely under the influence of this all-powerful associa-

tion, are also described by the imaginative orators of Congress as standing ready to snap up their adventurous brethren on their setting foot in this Western *El Dorado*.

“A more abject, helpless race than the natives of the portion of this region lying nearest the Rocky Mountains, it is impossible to conceive. Their situation is not exaggerated by the traveller whom you have quoted as describing them ‘to live naked in holes, and to eat roots, lizards, and snails:’ they have no furs to trade, consequently have no relations of any kind with the Hudson’s Bay Company, whose sole aim and object, notwithstanding the extended views ascribed to it—is *immediate gain*.

“The Indians of the middle region are, physically and morally, a better conditioned race. They trade with the Hudson’s Bay Company, because there are at present no other traders; but in other respects they are much more under the influence of American Missionaries who have settled among them.

“At the period of the formation of ‘Astoria’ the lower banks of the Columbia were occupied by a numerous race of natives who were formidable from their entire submission to the dictates of their chiefs. This tribe has become nearly

extinct, principally from the ravages of a deadly type of fever and ague, which broke out among them about ten years ago : the lower valley of the Columbia does not contain five hundred of the Aboriginal race ; and in a very few years they will have utterly vanished, for disease in its most loathsome form is rife among them.

“ On the coasts and islands of the northern portion of the ‘ Oregon,’ the red men are still numerous. They are here a bold, manly race ; similar in habits and character to the warlike tribes which disputed with the Pilgrim Fathers of New England the possession of the Atlantic coast. They are by no means under the influence of the Hudson’s Bay Company ; for although it has trading establishments among them, these are continually exposed to attack and surprise, and are the places I have alluded to where defensive precautions are adopted.

“ While the Americans denounce so fiercely England’s monopoly of trade, and fancied military possession of the Oregon, they keep out of view an influence which is working strongly in their own favour—the influence of Missionaries sent out and supported by the great Presbyterian and Wesleyan Societies in Boston and New York. America disclaims foreign colonies ; but she rejoices over the political

influence which her Missionaries acquire in the scene of their labours. The fairest group of the Pacific—the Sandwich Islands—though nominally ruled by its own dusky sovereign, is, in reality, entirely under the sway of a couple of *ci-devant* Presbyterian Missionaries (alas, for the poor light-hearted natives whose hard fate it is to be under the iron rule of these sour and ignorant Calvinists!) and in the Oregon there are, at this time, between thirty and forty of those semi-religious, semi-political pioneers; some of whom have undeniably done much for the improvement and civilization of the Aborigines, while the religious mission of too many has been adopted merely as the means of securing snug locations for themselves and families in this Western paradise. A free passage, an annual salary, and occasional help-offerings, place an emigrant Missionary, on his arrival in 'Oregon,' in far better circumstances than could be his lot had he become an emigrant printer or shoemaker.

“Several French Canadian priests labouring also in this wilderness are a thorn in the sides of the Protestant *brethren*, disputing with them, not in the most friendly spirit, the right of converting the Pagans, and putting to shame



their efforts after self-aggrandizement by a singleness of purpose, (which purpose is *propagandism*) and entire devotion thereto.

“ I am,

“ Sir,

“ Your most obedient servant,

“ A. S.”

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(A sudden call to the Continent prevented me from continuing those letters. For some time afterwards public attention seemed quite withdrawn from the subject. It has now been forcibly recalled. I resume the discussion in a narrative form.)

The adventurous founders of Astoria, and their successors from the North-west, were too much engaged in providing for their own safety, and in prosecuting the trade of furs, to pay any attention to agriculture. The wild deer supplied them with meat ; fish in great abundance was found in the river and its tributaries ; bread and vegetables were considered as luxuries, which it befitted not a fur-trader to aspire after.

Thus matters went on for several years. In 1824, Mr. John M'Loughlin—a man who has had much influence on the destinies of the Oregon—was appointed by the Hudson's Bay

Company to the management of its affairs west of the Rocky Mountains. Mr. M'Loughlin brought to this task great energy, inflexible perseverance, and much attachment to agriculture. Brought up in the cold district forming the north-eastern part of Lower Canada, where, spite of an adverse climate, the French Canadians raise a sufficiency of corn for their subsistence, Mr. M'Loughlin was unwilling to believe that the more genial climate of the Oregon was unfitted for agriculture. He entered upon it with his accustomed energy, and ample crops of wheat, Indian corn, and other cereals soon rewarded his exertions; while stock thrived well, and, carefully fostered, rapidly increased in numbers.

One of the stipulations in the Treaty of Amity of 1814 with the United States being that all places taken during the war should be restored, Astoria was abandoned, and the chief establishment of the Hudson's Bay Company placed on the north side of the Columbia River, at about one hundred miles from its mouth. On this establishment the name of Fort Vancouver (in honour of the celebrated navigator) was bestowed. Fields soon flourished around it; the seeds of fruit-trees brought from England sprang up and formed an orchard; even a vineyard

was planted out from cuttings brought from California. In short, Vancouver bore the appearance of a thriving agricultural settlement ; its title to the name of 'Fort' was gained solely by a paling of wood of some twelve feet high erected around the buildings. To this place the ship bringing goods from England annually came, and here the furs collected at the different stations were deposited for return shipment, so that it was the head-quarters of the fur-trade west of the Rocky Mountains.

Of the officers and servants (principally of Canadian birth) employed in that trade, many had 'wed a savage woman,' who had raised for them 'a dusky race.' Some of them who had accumulated a little money, who were growing old, and wearied of their toilsome life, thought that it would be better for them to take up their permanent abode in the region they were in, than to return to Canada, where their families would be 'as strangers in a strange land.'

The tract which they selected for their settlement was on the banks of the Wallamette, a considerable stream, flowing from the south, which discharges itself into the Columbia, opposite Vancouver. Of the country watered by this river, as I shall have hereafter occasion to speak more at length, I shall here merely state that it

was admirably adapted for the purpose of settlement, that those Canadians were, for several years, its sole occupants, that it is the sole point yet occupied by settlers, and that it is the only tract of country possessing advantages for colonization in the whole disputed territory.

Colonized by British subjects, this secluded little colony should have lived under the British flag. But it did not do so. The policy of the Hudson's Bay Company over all its territories has been directed solely to the monopoly of the fur trade. The fur trade of this region lies almost exclusively to the North of the Columbia; for the South, therefore, the Company had no concern; and it affected to consider that there was an implied understanding that the Columbia River should form the boundary between the territories of the two nations. Mr. M'Loughlin, from peculiar motives, lent countenance to this impression. His idiosyncrasy is a belief in grievous oppressions practised on his brethren, the French Canadians, and no Irish patriot equals him in intense execration of Saxon dominion. He, naturally, wished not *that* oppressive rule to be exercised over a district where several of his own descendants had taken up their abode, and to which he, himself, looked as his final resting place.

Undeterred by the failure of the 'Astorian' enterprise, a small body of adventurers from the United States again projected in 1831 a trade with the Indians of the Columbia, joined with a salmon fishing. The party encountered the most vigorous opposition from the Hudson's Bay Company. Higher prices were offered to the Indians for their peltries than the American interlopers could afford to give — a higher value was offered to *them* for their stock in trade than they could expect, otherwise, to realize. Of this they wisely accepted ; and then were received and quartered at the Hudson's Bay establishments.

They carefully scanned every thing they there saw, including the progress of the infant settlement at the Wallamette ; and on their return to the United States made reports of their observations to the Executive and to the Senate. These induced a course of action by the former ; by the latter they were published and disseminated without scrutiny. The course of action of the Executive was to send out emissaries covertly to spy into the land : they returned and made further communications, which were again received and published by the Senate. Missionaries from the Wesleyan and Presbyterian bodies,\* also, made their way out — the

\* Much to the credit of those bodies, they determined that,

Wesleyans round Cape Horn—the Presbyterians across the continent, and corresponded largely with the religious public on the state of matters in the Oregon.

to avoid any risk of rivalry between their different Missionaries, these should be instructed to select for themselves separate fields of action, in which they should not encroach one on the other. The injunction has been rigidly obeyed, and perfect harmony and co-operation mark their respective proceedings. The Wesleyans stationed themselves in the lower district of the Columbia, the Presbyterians higher up. Their rules of action were different—the Wesleyans attempted the education in English, and advancement in civilization of the youthful natives; the Presbyterians, whose directors enjoin upon them “not to give credence to the popular error that man must be civilized before he is Christianized,” applied themselves to the dissemination of Scripture and its doctrines, by printing and preaching in the native tongues. A far different feeling from this exists between those sects and the Roman Catholics. On this subject I will here quote an anecdote, which I had already published:—“The American Missionaries had first occupied the field. French Canadian priests arrived a few years afterwards, and gained great ascendancy among the natives by the distribution of a Biblical tree, showing pictorially many of the Old Testament histories:—the coming of our Lord Jesus, and the subsequent progress of His Church through the straight gate, until these pestilential heretics, Luther and Calvin, verged from the narrow way leading to salvation into a crooked road which (so the picture shadowed) led them and their followers to eternal fire. This had wonderful effect, and the Protestant brethren tried in vain to redeem their lost ground by exhibiting an antagonist tree, showing the gradual divergence of Rome from the right path.”

'Those means of drawing public attention to this subject were slowly effecting their aim, when they received a mighty impulse from the publication of Mr. Washington Irving's 'Astoria.' This very entertaining work was cordially received in England: in the United States it was the main origin of the popular excitement which has made the Oregon the question of the day. If war does ensue between the two countries, quiet 'Geoffrey Crayon' will have had no small share in causing it.

I spent several days in the Wallamatte Colony in May, 1840. It then contained about one hundred families. By far the greater part of these were French Canadians and their descendants. They formed a very respectable, and, considering the country and their previous mode of life, very regular congregation, ministered to by Monsieur Blanchette, a most estimable and indefatigable priest of the Roman Catholic faith. A few Americans had also located themselves—stragglers from whale-ships and trapping parties: and the Wesleyan mission consisted of four families, comprising a clergyman, a surgeon, a schoolmaster and schoolmistress, and an agricultural overseer, under whom the native lads acquired some instruction in farming, for which their labour was more than a recompense.

The settlers, aware that under American law they would have a preferable title to but a limited number of acres, had diligently searched the banks of the river for the most fertile and advantageous locations. Thus the settlement, even then, extended for more than twenty miles along the river. The people lived in a rude plenty; and seemed contented, happy, and healthy. Their surplus produce of wheat, &c., they bartered with the Hudson's Bay Company for goods.

The tide of emigration to this region of the extreme West had not yet set in; but its pioneers were already on the spot. One of these, Mr. Thomas Farnham, has since published a narrative of his travels across the Rocky Mountains, and through this region, which has attracted considerable notice. He was for some time my fellow traveller; and was a character whom it would delight Dickens to paint. The most perfect plausibility, much dry humour, considerable intelligence, consummate impudence, and most indomitable self-reliance, were mixed up in him in a most amusing manner. He talked grandiloquently, and acted shabbily; in fact, held himself alike ready (and was alike fit) to be the pettifogging Attorney or the Chief Justice of the State in embryo.

In 1843 emigration began in earnest. The



passage of the Rocky Mountains it was discovered could be effected in covered waggons: and the journey which had been long considered as practicable only by resolute men well armed and organized, was effected by families moving Westward, bag and baggage: three months from Missouri placed them in safe quarters in the Wallamette. Such numbers flocked Westward, that in 1844 the population settled in that valley amounted to five thousand souls: the emigration of this year (1845) has probably raised it to double that amount. And this emigration will, in all likelihood, continue. Iowa long the *ultima thule* of Westward emigration, is become so sophisticated as to have a capital, a legislature, and a Court of Justice (not presided over, but occasionally assisted by Judge Lynch), while its neighbour, Wisconsin, has become so populous, as to have a log hut for every fifty thousand acres. This won't suit expansive squatters: so 'Westward-ho!' is the cry.

The Hudson's Bay Company, in accordance with the policy I have already adverted to, endeavoured to foster a colony on the Cowlitz, a small river flowing into the Columbia from the north: but it succeeds not. The advantages of soil, situation, and climate are strong in favour of the Wallamette, and the few who were induced

to try the northern settlement, soon transferred themselves to the southern one.

Scarcely had the emigrants safely established themselves, when, true to their habits of self-government, they peaceably organized a Court of Legislature and an Executive. And to their honour be it told, the first act of the former was to decree that no spirituous liquors should be imported, distilled, or sold. Truly, this shows that they are of the right mould of men to form the elements of a great State: and further (writes my respected friend Mr. M'Loughlin to me under date November, 1844) "they declare that, if in ten years the Boundary is not settled, they will erect themselves into an independent State."

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Having thus endeavoured, concisely, to sketch the progress of discovery, trade, and settlement in the Oregon; and stated my opinions as to the claims thereto of England and America, I shall now proceed to describe the country to which those claims are made. Previous, however, to entering on this subject, I shall advert shortly to Russian America.

Russia laid claim to a portion of North-Western America, on the ground of exploration and occupation by trading parties from Kamtschatka. The claim was not altogether unfounded, for

such trading parties had actually established themselves at several points on the coast previous to its exploration by Cook and his successor, Vancouver, although they were incompetent and unauthorised to make any accurate survey, or to establish Russian supremacy.

Russian America was long undefined; indeed, the Pacific Coast, altogether, from the time of the Nootka difficulty, and Vancouver's voyage, was equally unknown and unthought of. In 1824, Russia seems to have determined to obtain a clear definition and acknowledgment of her American territory; for she concluded in April of that year a Convention with the United States, and in February following, one with England, defining the Boundary of that territory. Both Conventions are essentially to the same purport.

A line drawn from the Arctic Ocean (which, by the way, had not then been explored) along the parallel of  $141^{\circ}$  W., was declared the limit in the interior. This continued would have struck the Pacific Coast in latitude  $60^{\circ}$  N.: but a special reservation was made that the Russian territory on the coast should comprehend *Prince of Wales' Archipelago*, extending to latitude  $54^{\circ} 40'$ ; and that from latitude  $56^{\circ}$  northward, Russia should have possession of a tract along the coast of ten marine leagues in breadth.

I think a fair inference might be drawn

from the United States accepting such an absurd Boundary Line as the above, (England's concession on such a point is not matter to surprise) that her diplomatists knew well they were consenting to a partition of what they had no real claim to.

Russian America is valuable for its fur-trade; this is carried on by an imperial Company, of which the Emperor is governor, and a principal capitalist.

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I have already stated that America's present right of joint trade and settlement with England, extends from latitude 42° to latitude 56° N. That England holds, as regards America, the same rights to the same region: while, as I assert, she holds, as regards Mexico, the same claim to the region lying between latitude 42° and San Francisco (38°).

The more moderate politicians of the United States *now* maintain that the Boundary Line between the two nations eastward of the Rocky Mountains, should be extended to the Pacific along the same parallel of latitude, i. e., 49° N.

It was long in discussion between the two governments under what conditions the Columbia River should form the line of demarcation; and,

I believe, the proposals of America as late as 1842, adhered to this mode of settlement.

In describing the country it will be desirable to consider it in the divisions which these different claims and propositions mark out.

There are :—

1st. The country between 56° and 49° N., which were the most moderate of the American propositions given effect to, would fall to the share of Great Britain.

2nd. The country between 49° and the Columbia River, which, (with a slight reservation to be adverted to) might some years ago have been secured for England.

3rd. The country between the Columbia River and 42°, the Spanish (now Mexican) boundary acknowledged by the United States in 1819. And :—

4th. The country between 42° and San Francisco (38°) in which, under the Nootka Treaty, England possesses the joint right of settlement.

The first of the above divisions has a coast line of about five hundred miles ; its breadth is about three hundred and fifty miles. It thus forms a territory of one hundred and seventy-five thousand squares miles, exclusive of the adjacent island—Queen Charlotte's—which has an area of upwards of five thousand square miles.

This extensive territory is, at present, occupied solely by Indians, and by a few officers and servants of the Hudson's Bay Company engaged in the fur trade. This trade is conducted at two positions on the coast, and six in the interior country; the coast trading-houses being supplied by a coasting vessel from Vancouver, while the wants of the establishments in the upper country are supplied by land transport from the northern waters of the Columbia. The Indians of the coast are numerous, fierce, and treacherous. Their natural intelligence is considerable; and, occupying a country in which deer and fish are abundant, they are but little dependant on the traders. In the interior country, the natives are much inferior in character and position.

This extensive tract is quite unfit for agricultural settlements. It is sterile and rocky; and its climate, though not cold as that of the eastern side of America under the same latitudes, is more than equally objectionable from continual rains during six months of the year, and dense fogs during the other six months.

Doubtless as an adjunct to a State peopled by an energetic race, the value of this tract would be great. The fur trade is even now trifling, in a little while it will be exhausted; but

the numerous inlets and harbours everywhere to be found on this bold coast, would give shelter to hardy fishermen, whose labours would be abundantly recompensed in prosecuting the whale-fishery of the ocean, the white-fisheries of the coast, and the salmon-fisheries of the rivers,—for all of which advantages are here offered, such, as I believe, were never elsewhere found singly, still less united. The shores are covered with forests of pines of peculiar value for ship-building; and numerous indications have been observed of the existence of strata of coals, and mines of iron.

The second division of territory has a coast line of two hundred miles, and its breadth (to the northern branch of the Columbia, which here runs parallel to the coast) is about the same, thus forming an area of forty thousand square miles.

This district is also, at present, valuable to civilized man only for the few furs traded with its Aborigines. The agricultural settlement at Fort Vancouver supplies merely the wants of those engaged in the fur trade, and another attempted on the Cowlitz River, near the straits of Juan de Fuca, has failed of success. The country is not so rugged as that which I before described; the climate is also better;

and the soil, though not naturally fertile, is capable of successful cultivation. '*But where are the cultivators to come from?*'—Australia, Cape of Good Hope, Canada, New Zealand, surely one and all present greater advantages to British emigrants; and the sea-voyage to the most distant of these is two months shorter than that to the Columbia River.

To this division the extensive island known as 'Vancouver's,' may be considered to belong. This island has an area of nearly twelve thousand square miles, and it possesses far greater advantages, in soil and natural configuration for settlement, than the adjacent parts of the continent. It is stated, I know not with what truth, that the sect of fanatics called Mormons, who muster several thousands in numbers, tired of the persecutions to which they have been exposed in the Western States of the Union—project a migration in 1846 to this island. The step would be a bold, but a prudent one. They would, there, have little cause to fear any interference with their peculiar social organization.

The diplomatists of the United States would, I have learnt from good American authority, until the present excitement arose, have surrendered both the above regions to England, with the reservation of the tract bounded by the Columbia River on the south, the Straits



of Fuca on the north, the Pacific on the west, and the Cowlitz River on the east. This reservation would have given to their country the command of the Columbia River for fifty miles from its mouth.

If English honour can be saved, if we can make such terms as will satisfy ourselves and the world, that we have not truckled to America in this matter, let us, by all means, make a lease to the possessors of the southern bank of the Columbia of the northern regions at a peppercorn rent; or, better still, a grant thereof, free and unbought. To Britain they will never be of value, while they will continually expose her to difficulties.

In describing the third section of country, the most prominent subject is the River Columbia, which forms its principal outlet to the ocean. This river has a course of about one thousand miles (I descended its stream eight hundred and fifty miles) and, though it cannot, in length, in volume, or, in facilities of navigation, compete with the great rivers flowing through the continent into the Atlantic, it is still a mighty stream, having a breadth of two miles at fifty miles from its mouth. Its navigation has acquired a bad character, in consequence of there being a difficult and dangerous bar at its mouth, on which several wrecks—the last of an American vessel of

war—have taken place. Vessels of large draught of water have, certainly, much difficulty in entering, and still greater in getting out to sea, for the passage is intricate and tortuous; but the landmarks of the *embouchure* are bold, and easily recognized, and a steam tug would obviate all risk and difficulty. The bar once passed, there is good navigation for vessels of four hundred tons up to Fort Vancouver. Above this the navigation becomes broken by descents of the river over ledges of rocks; but these are not frequent, and, though dangerous to a frail boat, the only craft now used, they would but little impede a steamer of good power and light draught of water, such as surmount the rapids of the St. Lawrence. With such, I have no hesitation in saying, that at certain seasons the Columbia might be navigated from the ocean to the spurs of the Rocky Mountains.

The valley of the Columbia for one hundred and fifty miles from the sea, is to a distance of twenty miles covered by a dense forest of trees of gigantic growth, quite beyond the efforts of puny man to clear away. Open plains do occur, but they are few and far between, and not adapted for settlement, in consequence of the want of water in summer. The climate is but

indifferent. The rainy season extends from November to March, and the quantity of rain poured down upon the earth during that period is very great. Frost and snow are unfrequent. The summer is dry, and the heat intense and long continued, the thermometer for four months frequently attaining 100° in the shade. Great inundations from the river take place in early summer, and the rapid exhalation of these and the wintry rains under a burning sun, make fever and ague of a most severe, frequently dangerous, type very prevalent.

The country higher up the river is much in contrast to this. More distant from the wide Pacific, rains are here unfrequent; the woods give place to plains of immense extent, and health and vigour are enjoyed by the residents, instead of the langour and depression felt by those in the lower valley. Climate would thus make it a desirable country for settlement; but its soil is indifferent in the extreme: indeed, it is one wide expanse of shivered but yet undecomposed\* rock, over which a scanty grass is all that grows. The Presbyterian Missionaries found it most difficult to discover spots on

\* The marks of comparatively recent volcanic formation are apparent over all this region.

which there was soil enough to raise the vegetables they required for their families.

Such is the character of the wide region, covering upwards of two hundred and fifty thousand square miles, between the northern branch of the Columbia River and the Mexican boundary (a narrow slip in the vicinity of the coast excepted). It is tenanted by many, but not numerous tribes of Indians, all pacific in their character, some of whom possess large bands of horses which roam at large among the scanty pastures. This region, notwithstanding the disadvantages which I have described, will eventually become of immense value to the adjacent agricultural district. Its adaptation for sheep raising, is in every respect greater than that of our Australian possessions. Who would attempt to estimate the flocks that in a quarter of a century hence will be fed in its illimitable pastures?

The agricultural district I refer to in the last paragraph is the valley of the Wallamatte, which I have already stated to be in process of occupation and settlement.

For nearly twenty miles before joining the Columbia, the Wallamatte flows through a region of dreary forest ; and, before the traveller emerges into the beautiful and fertile plains bordering

its upper waters, he has to pass a point where the stream makes a fall over a ledge of rocks of upwards of twenty feet in height.\*

The country above this barrier assumes a new and interesting character. The soil is a rich diluvial mould, the land is unencumbered with forest, but agreeably variegated by scattered clumps of oak and other useful woods. The country undulates pleasingly ; and at the distance of a few miles from the river there are ranges of green hills, behind which plains again appear. The river has a swift but not impetuous descent, and is, during several months, navigable for fifty miles above the Falls. The climate improves as we recede from the Columbia : the rains are less continuous, and the summer's heat less oppressive. I do not estimate the valley of the Wallamette at less than two thousand square miles, almost all adapted for cultivation. To the south of it lies a country even finer—the valley of the Umqua—a river flowing direct into the Pacific in latitude 43°.

\* Mr. M'Loughlin, the principal British authority in the disputed territory, has already obtained from the self-constituted Legislature of the Oregon, a grant, for a series of years, of tollage on craft at a small canal which he purposes to make past this obstruction.

In fact, the whole region adjacent to (that is within one hundred and fifty miles of) the Pacific coast, southward from the mouth of the Columbia to the Mexican boundary, presents great advantages for colonization. The Wallamatte River yields an entry into this fertile region from the Columbia, while the Umqua and Clamet Rivers flowing direct to the Pacific, give more direct means of communication, although their entrances are also encumbered with troublesome barriers.

This is a true but meagre sketch of the "Oregon," that *El Dorado* to reach which the citizens of the United States have, in surprising numbers, for the last two years, braved a long and toilsome journey across the continent. And who will say that their toils will not be repaid?

That such a country, occupied by such a people, is destined to become nothing else than an appendage to the Atlantic States I am unwilling to believe. Free and independent, it would have a high destiny before it: and I recall with pleasure a very sagacious remark made to me on this subject by Lord Palmerston. I had represented to his Lordship (as I had previously done to Lord Aberdeen at the Foreign Office) the advantages of this region, had stated the rapid emigration of American citizens to it and ex-

pressed my apprehension of the undue influence in the Pacific, which its admission into the Union would give to the United States. He replied : —“ There is no danger of that ; it will become a second Texas.” (*Texas had not then been annexed.*)

It requires no prophet to foretel that the northern part of California, (which I have classed as the fourth division of undefined territory) if not the whole of that Province, will fall into the same hands as the Wallamatte and the Umqua. Indeed, there are good reasons for anticipating that, without any extraneous assistance, the American residents in that Province will soon have the power, as they already have the inclination, to cast off the sway of the feeble and inert Mexicans. In fact, Mexican supremacy here is more in name than in reality. The few military supported, the civil and revenue officers, are all native Californians : to the general revenues of the Republic the province makes no remittances, and from them receives no supplies ; and it has not, for several years, even taken the trouble to send members to the Mexican congress. In fact, the native Californians hate the Mexicans : and the system of government, weak and inefficient as it is, has been supported so long solely by the personal energies of a few officials, who, under covert of administering

Mexican laws, (particularly those of revenue) minister much to their own interests. In fact, Mexico might justly boast, if she so listed, of having (what England has not yet been able to organize) a strictly self-supporting colony.

Having had considerable intercourse with the civil and military authorities of this province, I can speak with confidence of their shameless venality, and of the oppressive system which they administer. The revenue laws are nominally all but prohibitive of the importation of any other than Mexican manufactures ; subjects of other States are liable to expulsion unless they take the oath of Mexican citizenship ; the marriage of such with the fascinating daughters of the country, is still prohibited, unless in addition, they abjure protestantism and submit to baptism at the hands of a catholic priest, the rites of the Protestant Church are prohibited —(an almost unnecessary prohibition, for I never could discover any religion at all among the Anglo-Saxons there).

The people who are of a mixed Spanish-Indian race, are superstitious, ignorant, and priest-ridden ; yet their leaders, under covert of Mexican law, have confiscated and seized for themselves, the numerous — and because well-cultivated, valuable—missionary stations, which pious and



energetic priests from old Spain had established, and for more than half a century maintained, for the civilization, protection, and employment of the aboriginal Indians. Well, indeed, may it be said of this beautiful country that "here only man is vile."

The harbour of San Francisco is unrivalled in the world. A bay of many leagues in circumference, abounding in safe anchorages, is entered from the ocean by a deep strait of less than three miles in breadth. Into this bay several rivers, the Sacramento—(having a course of about four hundred miles) the Buena Ventura, and the St. Joaquin, the principal ones—empty themselves, and afford communication with a wide expanse of interior country of the most fertile description. The climate cannot be surpassed; it equals that of the finest parts of Europe. Rains are unfrequent; there is so little cold in winter that no fire-places are to be seen; and the heat in summer is much more tempered than in the region of the Columbia.

The whole tract north of San Francisco is all but uninhabited. A farming establishment belonging to General Vallejo, the military commandant of the district, in the interior country, and another occupied (but since abandoned) by the Russian Fur Company at Bodega on

the coast, were, when I was there, the sole places inhabited. An enterprising Swiss gentleman has since established himself—more in defiance than by consent of the Government—on the banks of the Sacramento, and following the same method as Vallejo, *i. e.* employing in agriculture the demi-civilized Indians cast adrift by the breaking up of their training schools, the missions—he has, as I learn from a recent visitor, made most rapid progress. Several of his countrymen have started for the purpose of joining him.

Did I speak of the amazing crops of every European grain and vegetable grown at these singular establishments, I should, perchance, be considered as romancing. California requires no illusive descriptions, but plain naked truth to recommend its value and importance.

## POSTSCRIPT.

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The foregoing pages were in the press before the arrival, in this country, of President Polk's Message to the Congress of the United States.

That message has been very generally viewed by the English Press as more conciliatory than the inaugural declaration of the same authority. Without being an alarmist, I must confess that I regard it in a very different light. I consider its tendency to be of more imminently dangerous character than was that of the previous communication.

The points of Mr. Polk's address may be summed up thus :

1st.—“His own reiterated opinion of the irrefragable claim of the United States to the whole of the Oregon territory.

2nd.—“A declaration that he, unwillingly, and in deference only to the purposes of his predecessors in office, sanctioned a negotiation

having in view a compromise, that is—a partition of the country.

3rd.—“An opinion that the progress of the negociation ‘affords satisfactory evidence that no compromise which the United States ought to accept can be effected.’

4th.—“All propositions heretofore made by the United States for a compromise have been withdrawn.

5th.—“A recommendation to Congress to authorize the Executive to give notice of the termination, at the end of a year, of joint occupancy.

6th.—“This done ‘the United States shall have reached a period when the national rights in Oregon (*i. e.* the possession of the whole) must be either abandoned or firmly maintained.’ ”

I must confess, I can see nothing pacific in the character of such a communication: and its tone, though not overtly belligerent, is expressive of unfaltering decision.

The support by Congress of President Polk’s course of policy would, of course, occasion a declaration of war on the part of Great Britain; and the sole hope for the preservation of peace must rest on the rejection of the President’s recommendations by the Congress.

Can we hope for such a rejection?—I think not. The election of Mr. Davis, a thorough-going Polk politician, to the chair of the House of Representatives is a sign of the influence of the party there; and he must be little acquainted with the American character, who is not sensible of the deep effect which several declarations in the Message will produce. If “a cry” is good in an English election contest, ten-fold is its efficacy in the Western Republic; and Mr. Polk has suggested some very stirring ones:—“The Oregon—one and undivided,” “Justice from Mexico,” (*i. e.* a good slice out of her territory,) “No European interference or colonization,” “No Old World balance of power,”—all these will be powerful *arguments* with the governing body—*i. e.* the people; and will infallibly raise an excitement for Polk’s policy, such as Webster, Clay, and Calhoun can, if they *willed*, do little to temper or subdue.

THE END.

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